

The selection of suitable soil for the planting of lichee trees is most essential. Alluvial soil lying along the banks of fresh water streams is to be preferred. A soil composed of sand and mud in about equal proportions and about six feet above water is considered ideal. The lichee tree is extremely sensitive to cold weather and thrives best in warm climates. Its two deadliest enemies are salt water and cold, and for this reason it is difficult to grow lichee trees even in South China.

An abundance of manure is essential if the tree would flourish. In winter the young trees must be protected from the cold by wrapping the trunks with straw and covering the base of the tree with a mixture of hay and mud, and this process must be continued until the trees have reached the age of forty to fifty years, when it may be dispensed with.

The season for planting the lichee tree is in the spring. The seed or kernel from the fruit is placed in the ground and protected with manure and mud. When the tree is one year of age, it is transplanted into a soil adjacent to the bank of a stream, if possible.

At the age of five years, the tree comes into bearing, but the fruit is of a poor quality and gradually improves as the tree matures. Fruit of a good quality, as a rule, can not be expected until the tree is thirty to forty years of age. The life of the lichee tree is several hundred years.

(I think the chinese cannot graft the litchee at all. The few specimens that I saw were inarched ones; perhaps they might layer them also. Added note by F. N. Meyer.)

In April or May the lichee tree is in blossom, and if during these months it is visited by strong winds and heavy rains, in all probability it will not bear fruit.

It is said by the Chinese, and it is a very interesting fact to note, that prior to the plucking of the tree, it is immune from the ravages of insects and birds. The tree is protected, the Chinese say, by a kind of black-winged insect which spins its web in the tree and emits an unpleasant odor which effectually protects it from destructive insects and birds. But if any of the fruit is plucked, the tree is deserted by the black-winged insect and is left a prey to its enemies. Accordingly, the farmer who is wise will take the precaution to strip the tree of all of its fruit as quickly as possible.

Generally speaking, the lichee harvest occurs in the months of June and July, one variety after another coming to maturity. The poorest fruit marks the beginning and end of the season, the best coming in during the middle of the season.